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The Friday Letter

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Vol. 9 No. 3

February 3, 1989



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

February 2, 1989

Dear FNS Employees:

For the past 8 years, I have enjoyed working at the Department of Agriculture and, particularly, with the Food and Nutrition Service. As many in FNS know, I have informed Secretary-designate Yeutter that I do not wish to remain at the Department beyond the time required to accomplish a smooth transition.

Though I look forward to returning to the private sector, I leave USDA with mixed emotions. Working with you has been a genuine pleasure I shall miss. Dedication, creativity, and professionalism are the characteristics that mark your work.

Whether coming to FNS headquarters for a meeting or travelling to the regions for conferences, I have consistently found a unique sense of family--a very personal feeling. Both here in Washington and in offices across America, FNS employees with varied backgrounds and interests are bound together in a spirit of public service. I am proud to have been a part of this fine organization.

Thank you for all you have done to support me.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John W. Bode".

John W. Bode
Assistant Secretary for
Food and Consumer Services

Kondratas Offered Top-Level Position at HUD

On February 1, Administrator Anna Kondratas accepted a position from Secretary Jack Kemp of HUD. Anna will be leaving shortly for her new position of acting assistant secretary for Community, Planning and Development at HUD.

Do it for the Kids!

It's a phrase we've all heard, and food stamp participants are no different from the rest of us. We think we know which foods we should eat and which to avoid, but it's hard to change our eating habits. Like the rest of us, food stamp recipients may change their food habits if they are doing it for the sake of their children's health.

With this in mind, about a year ago, USDA contracted with the Ad Council of America in a campaign to provide nutrition-related information based on the "Dietary Guidelines for Americans" issued by USDA and HHS, and to help low-income families make the best use of the food stamp dollar for themselves and their children.

A free, colorful nutrition pamphlet entitled "Choosing Foods for a Healthy Family" is being distributed by FNS. The pamphlet came off press in late December and will be available nationwide through local food stamp offices. Copies were provided to the regional offices.

Radio and television public service announcements publicizing the pamphlet will begin about February 1. Posters and print and billboard ads in English and Spanish will also help get the message of good nutrition to food stamp participants.

If you would like additional information, contact the project coordinator, Jill Randell, Office of Analysis and Evaluation.

-Story by Mary Kennedy
Public Information Staff

FNS Transition Task Force Releases Report

The FNS Transition Task Force Report is complete after more than 2 months of work.

Initiated at the request of Administrator Anna Kondratas on September 13, 1988, the report paints a broad picture of the agency. The information in the report is derived from both internal research and discussions with employees at all levels.

A nine-member task force prepared the report with help from a four-member advisory panel and 18 contributors.

Distribution to regional administrators, deputy administrators, and staff directors was made on January 23. Copies can be made available for interested employees through their respective head office. A copy may also be consulted at the FNS Library.

"I was impressed by the effort and cooperation that went into producing the report," said Kondratas. "It's a fine piece of work, both interesting and useful."

-Story by Mary Kennedy
Public Information Staff

Rana Accepts New Challenge

After 16 years with FNS, Larry Rana, chief, Editorial, Printing and Audio-Visual Branch, has joined the USDA Office of Governmental and Public Affairs.

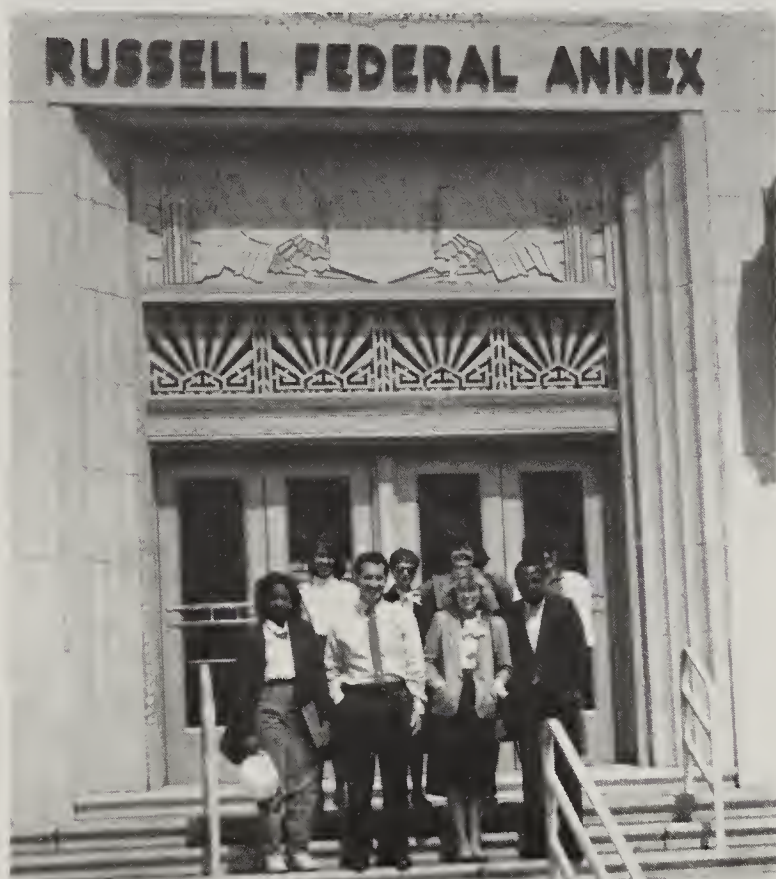
Larry will be deputy director of the Photography Division. As one of his first assignments in his new position, he covered Secretary-designate Clayton Yeutter at his Senate confirmation hearing February 2. Interestingly, it was 15 years earlier that Larry accompanied then USDA Assistant Secretary Yeutter to Pineville, Kentucky, where the first WIC clinic was opened.

Larry's can-do attitude will be missed here in FNS, and we wish him all the best in his new job.

SERO Committee Plans for Moving Day

The long-anticipated SERO office move from 1100 Spring Street to the Federal complex in downtown Atlanta has been shifted to the front burner by GSA.

With an August 1989 projected move-in date in the recently renamed Martin Luther King Federal Annex (formerly the Richard Russell Federal Building Annex), the SERO Employee Moving Committee now has its effort back in overdrive, too. Committee members are tackling some of the many details involved in the physical transfer, as well as serving as information sources for other employees. Committee ramrod is Laura Yeager of Financial Management, who spent a week observing MPRO's move last year.



SERO Employee Moving Committee members on the steps of what soon will be home. Front row (left to right) Cynthia McKinney, Field Operations; Doug Perry, Food Stamp Program; Laura Yeager, Financial Management; and Mose James, Special Nutrition Programs. Back row, Beth King, Financial Management; Catherine Rogers, Public Affairs; Margo Hester, Financial Management; and Helen Kuykendall, Office of the Regional Administrator.

It's hard to imagine that in a few months this will be SERO headquarters, say committee members, shown here touring the cavernous shell. When renovation is complete, new modular furniture will be installed in the refurbished building.



-Story and photos by
SERO Public Affairs Staff

KCCO Orientation Session Gives Staffers Overview

Five MPRO Food Distribution Program (FDP) staffers had a good look at the ASCS side of food distribution during a 1-day orientation session held in September at the Kansas City Commodity Office. The session was put together at the request of WRO for a new staff member, and MPRO took advantage of the opportunity to send its employees at the same time.

Darlene Sanchez, Ron Ulibarri, Sally Soja, John Tumler and Willie McWashington joined Dennis Setlock of WRO and Susan Proden, Mark Kreaggor and Sara Carter of Food Distribution Division for the orientation. The group was given an overview of domestic branch operations, including acquisitions, ordering, inventory, transportation, claims, and the common problems ASCS encounters in its day-to-day operations.

(KCCO Continued Next Page)

MPRO Renews Food Stamp Training Policy

A changing retail grocery market has led the St. Louis Field Office staff to revive the practice of holding large-scale food stamp orientation sessions for grocery store workers.

Some grocery chains have recently left the St. Louis market area and sold their stores. When that happened, new chains moved in and needed to train large numbers of new employees quickly. Shop N Save, Junior Food Marts, National Food Stores, and Stop and Go Food Marts all were training large groups of employees in retail grocery operations. St. Louis field staff offered group training sessions on food stamp handling procedures for more than 180 employees at 73 different stores.

When the Food Stamp Program was gearing up years ago, mass orientation sessions for retailers were commonplace. Once the initial push to authorize retailers subsided, though, field staff conducted orientation and educational visits on a store-by-store basis.

In recent years, the field staff's expanding role in nearly all FNS programs sometimes catches offices short-handed. Still, there is a clear need to train new retailers and managers in the business of accepting food stamps.

St. Louis OIC Fred Noyd feels the group sessions not only save time but better educate participants. "When you have that many people together, you get much more discussion than in single store situations," he said. "One person asks a question and that prompts another. You get a snowballing effect when a question and answer session gets rolling, especially when an issue seems unclear. We always get intense discussions when the subject of hot and cold sandwiches arises."

Noyd says another advantage of group orientation sessions is that each chain gets the same information on food stamp transactions. "No store manager can claim we didn't cover a certain issue



when everyone hears the same message," Noyd said. "Too, if a certain topic prompts lots of questions, supervisors often see the need to develop a policy to handle the situation at their stores. It's a very helpful process all the way around."

In the future, Noyd said, he will consider scheduling a single day each week to hold authorization sessions for St. Louis retailers.

-Story and photo by Craig Forman
MPRO Public Affairs Staff

(KCCO Continued)

The session gave FDP staffers a rare opportunity to get acquainted with some of the people they deal with on a day-to-day basis in their jobs.

In addition to the comprehensive orientation program, the staffers had an opportunity to visit Americol Warehouse (formerly Inland Storage) and tour its vast underground cold storage facility.

-Story by Joanne Widner
MPRO Public Affairs Staff

FNS Releases FSP Reports on Participation Rates

Two new reports prepared under contract to FNS have given the Food Stamp Program its best-ever look at participation rates among those eligible for the program. Among the findings: three-fourths of all persons in poverty eligible for food stamps participate in the program; and the program is apparently most successful at reaching those who need it most.



Based on newly available data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation, the reports, titled "Food Stamp Program Participation Rates" and "Food Stamp Program Participation Rates Among the Poverty Population, 1980-1987," are the first of a series of current perspectives on the program.

Though they bear similar titles, the studies focus on different data. The first is a "snapshot" of food stamp participation statistics for the 50 states and the District of Columbia during the month of August 1984. During that month, the study found 66 percent of all potentially eligible individuals, 81 percent of individuals in poverty, and 60 percent of all households potentially eligible for food stamps participated in the program.

The study also presents a variation on the participation rate figures. It shows that the participating 60 percent of eligible households received 80 percent of the benefits that would have been paid if all eligible households had participated. This suggests that the program is reaching lower income families--where both the need and the benefits paid are greater--in greater numbers than those with higher incomes and smaller benefits.

The report also found considerable variation in participation rates across selected groups. For example,

participation was higher than average among those with children and those receiving public assistance. Participation was lower than average among the elderly and those with earned income.

The second study, "Food Stamp Program Participation Rates Among the Poverty Population, 1980-1987," indicates that the participation rate for program-eligible people with incomes below the poverty level was between 74 percent and 82 percent over the 8-year period reviewed.

This is the most accurate and consistent estimate the program has ever been able to make. Using new data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation, and new methodology, the report makes for the first time some meaningful comparisons between Americans in poverty--32.6 million of them, according to the Census Bureau--and the 24 million poor who are eligible to participate in the Food Stamp Program. The estimate of 17.8 million eligible who actually participate in the program is drawn from those comparisons.

-Story by Steve Carlson and
Robert Dalrymple
Office of Analysis and Evaluation

Regional Offices Turn Programs Back to States

Providing food, funds, training, and guidance directly to local child nutrition programs is a job normally done by state agencies. But, in 1968, regional offices began signing direct agreements with local program operators to administer the programs directly from regional offices.

These programs are called Regional Office Administered Programs (ROAP). They came under direct Federal administration when, for a variety of reasons, states declined to administer

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them. Now the Federal Government wants to give these local programs back to the states.

WRO has been dealing directly with local program operators in five states, helping them implement child nutrition programs valued at nearly \$34.8 million. About 3 years ago, WRO sharply intensified its efforts to return the programs to the states. With the exception of Alaska's summer program, which the state has agreed to take over next summer, only one program in one state remains under WRO administration--the California Summer Food Service Program. In an interview before his recent retirement, then Regional Administrator Hicks Elmore said, "We are continuing to do all we can to turn back that program."

Persuading states to assume administration of these child nutrition programs has not been an easy task. "It literally took years," Elmore said, "and in some cases spanned different state administrations."



The WRO's Turnback Team (from left): Reese Payton, Jeff Fleckenstein, Carol Fahey, Terry Flynn, Hicks Elmore, Ed Mattson, Mel Fong, Mike Denton, and Jack Boozer.

Elmore felt that the regional effort to turn back the programs was worth it. "We were at a very real disadvantage administering local programs at long

range. We didn't know the local situation. We weren't readily available to local operators. And it was not very cost-effective or efficient. That's the message I took to governors, superintendents, and state school food service directors."

WRO has tried to ensure a successful transition and a smooth start as states pick up the programs.

Although Elmore took the lead in persuading state officials to accept the programs, he credited WRO Child Nutrition Programs staff with making it work. "Without legwork and followup by people like Reese Payton, Mel Fong, Ed Mattson, Mike Denton, Terry Flynn and Jeff Fleckenstein, and the support and encouragement of WRO Child Nutrition Director Carol Fahey, we might not have had the success we did. We could have failed at any point, but we didn't, and it was in large part due to the professionalism and hard work of these people."

-Story and photo by Dick Montoya
WRO Public Affairs Staff

Disabled Veteran Shines at FNS

A commitment by SERO officials to hiring disabled veterans was the key to a better future for copier/duplicator operator Dodge Carithers.

"I was very fortunate," said Carithers, who has a total hearing loss as a result of his service in Vietnam. "It took very understanding people here to help make it happen. You're only disabled when you stop working."

Carithers came to FNS in August 1984 under the Emergency Veterans Jobs Training Act.

"We were looking for someone to fill a new position in our Agency," said Arvid Dopson, deputy regional administrator.

(Veteran Continued Next Page)

(Veteran Continued)

"We gave the opportunity to Dodge because we believed that a hearing impairment would not stand in the way of performance of his duties." SERO gave Carithers the responsibility of handling all major duplicating jobs within the region.



Dodge Carithers prepares to copy some documents in the duplicating room.

"He's an excellent employee," said his supervisor, Lewis Wright, unit leader of Financial Management's Internal Budget and Administrative Services. In September 1987, SERO recognized Carithers' contributions by awarding him a certificate of merit.

A Vietnam veteran with two Bronze Service Stars and the Combat Infantryman Badge, Carithers was severely wounded in February 1967 while serving with the 25th Infantry Division in the Central Highlands near Pleiku, South Vietnam.

After his release from the Army, he worked primarily as an exterminator until his service-connected hearing loss made it difficult to perform his job.

"I went different places, but people don't hire deaf persons easily," Carithers said. "They don't feel that they can do the work."

But at SERO, management approaches hiring disabled veterans differently. Regional Administrator Virgil Conrad feels disabled vets can be an asset in FNS or in almost any other working environment.

"We're committed to hiring qualified disabled veterans regardless of their handicap," Conrad said. "Dodge is a prime example of what they can do when given the opportunity. With a little encouragement, others like him also can become productive citizens."

-Story by Steve Watson
SERO Public Affairs Staff

FNS Honors One Who Cares

Gladys Lee of Accounting Division has reached a blood donor's milestone. She has given blood 100 times over 32 years of participation in the Red Cross Donor Program.

Lee was recognized with a letter of commendation from Administrator Anna Kondratas. Cited in the letter is an appropriate phrase, "for extraordinary generosity and concern for her fellow citizens."



Natalie McCarthy, headquarters nurse (left), presents a letter of commendation from Administrator Anna Kondratas to Gladys Lee (center). A Red Cross representative shares the moment.

-Story by Janice Burns
Personnel Division

MARO Responds to Good Will Drive

MARO made the recent holiday season brighter for some less fortunate people.

Toys for Tots, a program sponsored by the U.S. Marines, and the Lifeline Emergency Shelter in Trenton, New Jersey, received five large bags of toys and five boxes of canned goods donated by the regional office staff.

Ed Rice, Financial Management funds management specialist, donated two frozen turkeys and three canned hams to the shelter, which provides food, clothing, temporary shelter, and counseling services to homeless women and children in Trenton.

The food was used to prepare the shelter's annual Christmas Eve meal, which feeds more than 1,000 needy people.

Carol Savage, Supplemental Food Programs specialist, and Jim Streeter, office services assistant, coordinated the drive in response to a news article in which the director of Lifeline made an appeal for food.



A representative from the Marine Corps presented Savage a certificate for participating in the toy drive.

-Story and photo by Marian Wig
MARO Public Affairs Staff

WRO Employees Help Make the Holidays a Little Happier

As part of their holiday observance, WRO employees once again dug into their pockets and pantries to help those less fortunate. Continuing a practice begun several years ago, WRO employees purchased 56 gifts for low-income children in Oakland and donated canned foods and cash to the San Francisco Food Bank.



Coordinating this year's food and toys drive were (left to right) Lynne Varney, WIC; Reese Payton, CNP; Audrey Lakes, FSP; Hicks Elmore, RA; Anita Carter, FSP; and Gloria Woo, front office.

-Story and photo by Dick Montoya
WRO Public Affairs Staff

**FEBRUARY IS
BLACK HISTORY MONTH
WATCH FOR FLYERS
ON EVENTS.**

Food Programs Participation Update

Following are preliminary estimates of participation in the Federal-State food assistance programs for the month of November with comparisons to the previous month and to the same month of last year.

	<u>Nov. 1987</u>	<u>Oct. 1988</u>	<u>Nov. 1988</u>	<u>2/</u>
<u>Food Stamp Program: 1/</u>				
People participating (mil.)	18.4	18.5	18.5	
Value of bonus coupons (\$ mil.)	924.8	955.5	956.7	
Average bonus per person	\$ 50.23	\$ 51.72	\$ 51.83	
Total program cost (\$ mil.)	1,024.7	1,059.8	1,061.1	
<u>National School Lunch Program:</u>				
Number of schools participating (thous.)	90.6	NA	NA	
Children participating (mil.)	24.6	24.6	24.6	
Children reached with free or reduced price lunches (mil.)	11.6	11.6	11.5	
Percentage of lunches served free	40.3	40.2	40.2	
Percentage of lunches served at reduced price	6.7	6.6	6.6	
Total program cost (\$ mil.)	336.8	384.6	368.7	
<u>School Breakfast Program:</u>				
Number of schools participating (thous.)	38.7	NA	NA	
Children participating (mil.)	3.8	3.8	3.8	
Percentage of breakfasts served free or at reduced price	87.5	86.7	86.7	
Total program cost (\$ mil.)	48.7	56.3	51.1	
<u>Child Care Food Program:</u>				
Number of meals served in centers (mil.)	36.0	40.7	38.4	
Number of meals served in homes (mil.)	26.3	30.9	30.9	
Percentage of all meals served free	78.3	78.1	78.4	
Total program cost (\$ mil.)	48.0	57.6	54.3	
<u>Special Supplemental Food Program (WIC):</u>				
People participating (mil.)	3.5	3.8	3.9	
Food cost (\$ mil.)	114.8	123.5	123.8	
Total program cost (\$ mil.)	134.9	150.2	151.3	
<u>Commodity Supplemental Food Program: 3/</u>				
People participating (thous.)	209.0	220.2	219.2	
Total program cost (\$ mil.)	3.4	3.8	3.8	
<u>Food Distribution to Indians and Needy Families:</u>				
Number of projects in operation	107	108	108	
People participating (thous.)	136.5	131.9	134.1	
Total program cost (\$ mil.)	4.3	4.5	4.6	
<u>Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program:</u>				
Total USDA cost (\$ mil.)	59.3	17.1	17.4	

1/ Puerto Rico has been excluded from all months.

2/ Data collected as of January 25, 1989.

3/ Includes data for all elderly participants.

Friday Letter Vacancy Listing by Vacancy Number

JOB TITLE	AREA OF CONSID.	SERIES	GRADE	CLOSING DATE	VACANCY NUMBER	OFFICE LOCATION
o Personnel Staffing Spec (Cancelled)	(G)	GS-212	9/11	02-08-89	89-57	PED
o Regional Adm	(A)	ES-120		03-03-89*	89-57	WRO
o Nutritionist	(A)	GS-630	9/11	02-13-89	89-60	NTSD
o Personnel Actions Clerk	(G)	GS-203	4/5	02-14-89	89-61	PED
o Supvry Computer Program Analyst	(FNS-N)	GM-334	13	02-09-89	89-62	IRMD
o Supvry Computer Program Analyst	(FNS-N)	GM-334	13	02-09-89	89-63	IRMD
o Secretary Typing	(A)	GS-318	4/5	02-13-89	89-64	PAD
o Computer Spec	(FNS-N)	GS-334	13	02-22-89	89-65	IRMD
o Management Asst.	(FNS-H)	GS-344	6	02-22-89	89-66	IRMD
o Mgmt Analyst	(FNS-H)	GS-343	11/12	02-15-89	89-67	OAE
o Secretary Typing	(FNS-H)	GS-318	5/6	02-16-89	89-68	BRD
o Supvry Staffing Specialist	(USDA-N)	GS-212	13	02-21-89	89-69	PED
o Food Prog Spec	(FNS-N)	GS-120	12	02-24-89	89-70	PAD

Office Location

PED - Personnel Division
 PAD - Program Accountability Div
 NTSD - Nutrition and Technical Serv
 OAE - Office of Analysis and Evaluation
 WRO - Western Regional Office
 IRMD - Information Resources Mgmt Div
 BRD - Benefit Redemption Div

Area of Consideration

(A) - All Sources
 (FN-N) - Food and Nutrition Service
 (Nationwide)
 (FN-HQ) - Food and Nutrition Service
 (Headquarters)
 (USDA-N) - United States Department
 of Agriculture (Nationwide)
 (G) - Governmentwide

* corrected date

Mary E. Kennedy, Editor

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